



"In Touch" at Hazel Park First UMC

Newsletter for all those who worship at First United Methodist Church of Hazel Park



Organized in 1924 • Incorporated in 1925 • Sanctuary Completed 1953

315 E. Nine Mile Rd. • Hazel Park, Michigan 48030 • 248-546-5955 • www.hpfirst.org



Pastor's Pen

Pastor Brian Steele

Inside the Pastor's Head

Devotional: "The Kingdom of heaven is like..."-Jesus



So, we're doing a worship series on Dr. Seuss. You may be thinking, "Why are we talking about children's books in church?" Understandable question.

To begin to answer that, let's examine how Jesus taught people. Jesus used metaphors that we call parables. Parables are stories that are told through metaphor, and Jesus did this A LOT! When Jesus says, "The Kingdom of heaven is like..." he is making a metaphor, and the metaphors Jesus makes were everyday, common understandings for the culture of his time. They didn't need Biblical Commentaries that we need today to understand what He was talking about. Jesus took what people knew, and taught them in ways they would understand. This is why we are taking classic books that people of all ages know and value and use them to tell the Gospel through that lens.

"The Kingdom of heaven is like...Horton looking foolish to everyone in town out of love for people nobody else sees." "The Kingdom of God is like....the Sneetches realizing they aren't so different from each other and find unity in diversity." "The Kingdom of heaven is like...Sam I am finally trying Green Eggs and Ham and finding the beauty of something new."

In his teaching, Jesus gave us a model that shows we can take stories and characters people know and use them as a tool to teach people what God's Kingdom looks like. That means we get to be creative in how we tell the Gospel. It doesn't mean we change the message, it means we change our methods for telling the message. If Jesus were alive today, I don't think he would be using a mustard seed to illustrate faith. He would take something that was well known so that new people who were wondering what this guy was about could understand.

Doing worship series like "The Gospel in Dr. Seuss" are fun. No doubt. But they are also faithful. A way we can engage people who we normally would not, and that's something we want to be about.

Top 3 Things I'm Working On:

- 1) Planning for Lent
- 2) Future visioning for our churches
- 3) Developing our hospitality ministries

What I'm reading and listening to:

- For Spiritual Development: *The Myth of a Christian Religion* by Greg Boyd
- Podcasts I try to listen to regularly: *The Bible for Normal People*, *Evolving Faith*
- For Fun: (your pastor likes to have fun, too): *Star Wars: Masters and Apprentices* by Claudia Gray

If you're interested in seeing what else I read or for recommendations at Goodreads: [goodreads.com/besteale2386](https://www.goodreads.com/besteale2386)

In grace,
Brian



Saturday, January 7th ~ Taking down the Christmas decorations 10:00am
Thursday, January 20th ~ Church Council Meeting at 7pm

Things to Keep in Mind

Church Directory for 2023



The corrections, additions and updates are being compiled for the 2022 Church Directory. Please take a minute to look and make sure that your name, address, phone number and e-mail address are listed correctly in the 2021 directory. If there are any changes, please let the church office know as soon as possible.

You can put a note in the box on the office door, send an e-mail to the church at hazelparkfirst@wowway.com or leave a voicemail by calling the church at 248-546-5955.

You can also take this opportunity to let the church know your birthday or anniversary so that your special days may be listed in future newsletters.



YOUR birthday and anniversary is important to us! If you are unsure if your birthday or anniversary is on our list, please let us know! We want to celebrate YOU!

Send an email to the office, or leave a note in the mailbox, so we can get you added!



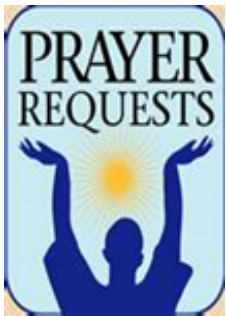
Health/Life Concerns: For those whom the holidays are difficult and painful, Baldwin House, Amber F's Dad Carl who has lymphoma in his eyes, Teresa for Social Security, The Martin Family, John S as he recovers, Rick and Gloria, Susie, Rich D's children, Sam, The Pinnell Family, Mr. James Cagiel, Katie Banninger

Comfort for the friends and families of: Family of Boyd Daugherty, Family of Lynn Prudden Carol's son-in-law mother

Serving in the Armed Forces: Emma Hardy, Sean Redd, Casey Allen, Brendan Schemers, Ronald Turner & Chris Collis

Gratitude's and Joys: The hospitality of our church, grandkids in church and grandparents. Everyone who donated and helped with the sock drive! Sandra's granddaughter on successful surgery (Katie Banninger), Joyful family gatherings.

Church Leaders: Pastor-Rev. Brian Steele, Al Holland-SPRC Chair, John Sarns-Ad Council Chair, Frank Cox-Lay Leader, Ashley Detoledo-Secretary, Lisa Johnson-Treasurer, Matt Sarns-Music Director, and Harriet Hardy-Organist.



Start the Year with the Holy Spirit

The Rev. Paul Perez says, “I’m not a fan of January.” He turns to scripture and finds words of grace that lift the spirit. “You are one of God’s beloveds and nothing can separate God from what God loves.”

It got cold this week in my part of Michigan. The temperatures dropped as the wind picked up speed. The upstairs corner room that is my home office is hot in the summer and cold in the winter. I layered up in my thickest sweater and donned my warmest socks as I hunkered down for a week of work. It really felt like January this week.

I’m not a fan of January. Christmas is over and weeks of cold stand between the Spring and me. It is a time when I find myself turning inward, reflecting on the past year, and looking forward to the next. Such introspection can be energizing and exciting. It can also be a bit overwhelming as I think of the things left undone in the past year and all that needs to be done in the coming year.

In this season of “year-end retrospectives” and “new year resolutions,” I’m thankful for the lectionary. Last Sunday was “Baptism of the Lord” in the church’s traditional liturgical year. This story is so important for the first Christians that it appears, in very similar forms, at the beginning of all four gospels. In each gospel, Jesus’s baptism by John in the Jordan marks the beginning of his public ministry. Each version describes the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on Jesus as he rises from the waters. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recount a voice from the heavens calling Jesus “beloved.” In terms of the gospel narrative, Jesus has not done anything yet. He is just getting started. He has no track record or accomplishments or lengthy resume. He hasn’t even laid out his plan or resolved to achieve impressive goals. Jesus does not have to prove himself. He is simply named and claimed as God’s beloved.

What a word of grace. In fact, I don’t know about you, but this is the word of grace I need during this cold winter week. I need to be reminded of my baptism, receive again the promise of the descending Spirit, and hear the truth that I am one of God’s beloveds.

So, during this bleak midwinter, when frosty wind makes you moan, I hope you remember your baptism. Know the Holy Spirit rests on you like the persistent bird boldly building a nest where it has no business being but is too stubborn to let anyone stop it. Because you are one of God’s beloveds and nothing can separate God from what God loves.

Whether in moments of picture-perfect snowfall or the harshness of a deep freeze, God says to each of us: There is nothing you can do to earn any of this. It is a gracious gift from me to you. You don’t have to prove yourself, accomplish anything, or please the right people. You don’t even need a fancy plan, eloquent vision, or New Year resolutions. Your worst moments, biggest mistakes, missed deadlines, shortcomings, failures can’t undo it. You are my beloved.

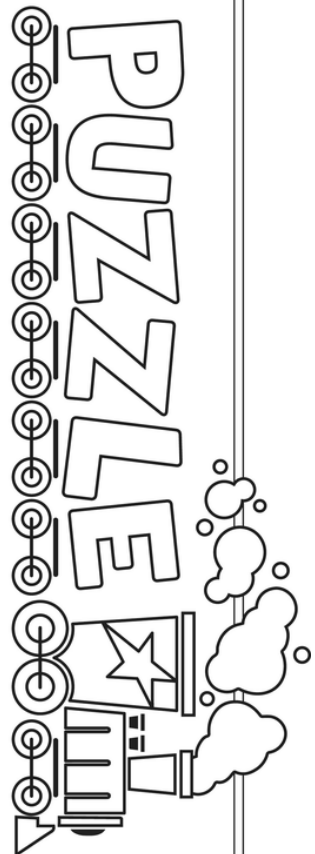


Handprint Snowflakes

Celebrate kids' unique individuality with this fun craft. Have the children trace their handprints on whitepaper. Then have children cut out and fold their hands two or three times while cutting a few shapes from each fold. When the children unfold their handprints, they'll see a unique snowflake design. Discuss how different and how beautiful each child's snowflake turned out. Stress that God has made each of us unique, special, and beautiful.

Materials Needed:







- white paper
- scissors
- pencils



A seasonal reminder

Signs of spring remind us of God's promises.

Directions: Use the picture code and clues to complete Isaiah 61:11, NIV.

- | | |
|--|---|
|  plants grow here
 to coil and jump
<i>(also a season of the year)</i>
 to expand and get bigger |  seeds are planted in this
 when watered, these make plants
 another word for seedling |
|--|---|

For as the _____ makes the _____
 come up and a _____ causes _____
 _____ to _____, so the _____
 Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
 and praise _____ up before all nations.

ISAIAH 61:11, NIV

Answer: soil, sprout, garden, seeds, grow, spring

Hazel Park First United Methodist Church
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Sunday Morning Service: 11:15 am
Church Office: 248-546-5955
E-mail: Hazelparkfirst@wowway.com
Website: www.hpfirst.org



January Birthdays

Sharon Allen - 1
Terri Morris -1
Matt Sarns - 9
Sue Anderson - 13